

SUBJECTS.**31. Grant of permission for the removal of trees on private lands without a pass.**

free of charge, from *unreserved* lands, timber—other than royal and reserved trees—dry wood, thorns, leaves of trees and shrubs, for *bona fide* agricultural and domestic purposes.

Mr. Padmanabhan Narayanan (Member, Pathanapuram Taluk) said that, under para 7 of the Forest Rules, a pass had to be taken out from the Divisional Forest Officer before any tree, other than royal trees, standing on private land, could be removed by the owner. The jurisdiction of a Divisional Forest Officer extended over about five taluks, and it was difficult in each individual case to apply for and obtain his permission in proper time. The result of the arrangement was that inordinate delay occurred and the passes were often received at a time when the necessity for them had ceased. There was thus loss and inconvenience to the people. With the present staff of forest guards, it should be very easy for the Forest department to prevent any possible illicit removal of timber from the Sirkar forests. The restriction on the liberty of the people to remove trees, other than royal, from their own registered holdings, was unnecessary and might be removed. Further, in cases of clandestine removal of timber from Sirkar lands, Section 52 of the Regulation operated to safeguard the interests of Government, as, under that Section, the onus of proving that the timber was removed from private land was upon the party concerned.

Dewan's reply.—The rule complained of is intended as a precaution against the illicit removal of timber from Sirkar lands. The Conservator will be asked to report on the working of this rule and to say if it can be relaxed without endangering the Sirkar interests. The Conservator will also be asked to see that applications are disposed of without delay.

32. Removal of obstruction to hill cultivation.

Mr. Geeverghese Catanar Geeverghese (Member, Chennannur Taluk) represented that the ryots were now experiencing much obstruction at the hands of the officers of the Forest department in carrying on malavirippu cultivation on hill slopes, and the people living near the hills, who mainly depended upon such cultivation, suffered greatly in consequence. He requested that orders might be issued to stop the reservation of lands within a radius of two miles from the hills and to afford every facility to the ryots for cultivation within those areas.

Dewan's reply.—The clearing and cultivation of hill slopes is an undesirable thing and the policy of Government is to prevent such clearing and cultivation as far as

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*Adoption of measures
for preventing the
export trade in fire-
wood.*

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possible. So far as reserved forests and reserved lands are concerned, cultivation in such areas, without the special permission of Government, would be illegal under the Regulation. Even in regard to unreserved lands, the rules provide for the Forest department controlling the cultivation of hill slopes in the interests of the reserved and royal trees. This control is necessary and will not be reduced.

Mr. S. Subramonia Karayalan (Member, Shencottah Taluk) said that the indiscriminate grant of permission for the cutting of trees from the forests to all who applied for the same would, in the long run, cause the total extinction of the most valuable species of timber. He observed that he had himself seen the valuable forests being denuded at the time of the boring of the Ariankavu tunnel. Till the passing of an order by the Acting Conservator of Forests recently, the forests on either side of the railway line from Punaloor to Shencottah were mercilessly cut and several cart-loads of timber were removed out of Travancore. The result was that the periodical monsoon was considerably affected and the taluk of Shencottah suffered most for want of water owing to the failure of the monsoon. The small loss of revenue that might be caused by the wholesale prevention of the export of firewood should not, under the circumstances, be allowed to weigh in deciding the question. Even with regard to local consumption, arrangements might be made for first cutting down only withered trees and those blown down by the wind before felling trees containing solid timber. It would also be an advantage if the Forest department would undertake to collect and stock such useless timber in the depots and sell the same to merchants with some commission, if not at prime cost. It was further necessary that the slopes on the sides of hill-streams should be acquired by Government, if they be found to belong to private individuals. The Member requested that the above suggestions might be kindly considered and early action taken to give effect to them as far as possible.

Dewan's reply.—The suggestions of the Member are noted. The Forest department is alive to the importance of this question. Permits for cutting firewood for export from reserved forests, reserved lands and unreserved lands have been practically stopped. In regard to *private* lands, Government have no right to say to their owners that they shall not cut and export the wood on such lands. All that we can do in such cases is to levy an export duty, which we are now doing, at practically the maximum rate possible under the Interportal Trade Convention. Government cannot do anything further in the matter.